



## Flathead National Forest

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## Media Release

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### Field Trips to Start Collaboration on Forest Plan Revision

*Public Invited to Experience the Forest and Share Their Values*

KALISPELL, MONT - The Flathead National Forest is embarking on a multi-year process to update its forest plan, the document that guides how we manage your public lands. The forest plan provides direction for managing resources and activities such as recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, historic and sacred sites, vegetation, mineral exploration and development, and timber.

“The Flathead National Forest provides many diverse opportunities for residents and visitors to live, work, and play across its 2.4 million acres. It’s an important place, and forest plan revision is the process that will guide its management into the future,” said Forest Supervisor Chip Weber.

The revision of the forest plan will be accomplished under the 2012 National Forest System land management planning rule. Forest plan revision is achieved in a three-phase process: assessment, revision, and monitoring. The planning rule calls for an enhanced commitment to collaboration and public engagement across all three phases, including outreach to groups such as youth. The rule also takes an “all lands” perspective: many trends and emerging issues such as demographic shifts and climate change require looking beyond our forest boundaries. The process for revising our forest plan will use the best available science with a focus on sustainability, “ecosystem services” (the benefits people derive from public lands), and a continued emphasis on multiple use management.

During phase-one, the assessment, a Forest Service team will identify and evaluate existing information about ecological, economic, and social conditions and trends related to the Forest and northwest Montana. The resulting assessment will provide information for the next two phases (revision and monitoring). Phase two, revision, includes the identification of the need to change the forest plan based on the assessment, development of a proposed plan, consideration of the environmental effects of the proposal, providing an opportunity to comment on the proposed plan, providing an opportunity to object before the proposal is approved, and finally, approval of the plan revision. Phase three, monitoring, is continuous and provides feedback for the planning cycle by testing relevant assumptions, tracking relevant conditions over time, and measuring management effectiveness.

Weber said “From start to finish this will be a collaborative effort. In the coming weeks and months we’ll be reaching out to other agencies, state, local and tribal governments, business and the public to help develop our plan and ensure we capture the values people have regarding their public lands.”

To start the collaborative process we are holding four public field trips which will each focus on subject matter important to the forest plan. On these field trips we need people to share their values and the benefits they derive from the Flathead National Forest as well as provide input to help us accurately capture the current conditions we have on the forest as they pertain to the topic of the field trip. The trips will also be an opportunity to experience the distinct geographical areas that make up our ranger districts.

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We anticipate the trips to run from 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM (except for August 29 which includes a stop at the Spotted Bear Ranger District with a 5:00 PM return). The trips will begin and end at the Flathead County Fairgrounds with transportation provided.

1. August 8 - Forest vegetation and disturbances including fire, timber harvest, and forest products (Tally Lake Ranger District)
  2. August 29 - Recreation settings, opportunities and access, native knowledge, existing wilderness and scenic character (Hungry Horse/Spotted Bear Ranger Districts)
  3. September 12 - Terrestrial and aquatic habitats, threatened and endangered species, species of conservation concern, and invasive species (Swan Lake Ranger District)
  4. September 26 – Inventoried roadless areas, recommended wilderness, and wild and scenic rivers (Glacier View Ranger District)
- \* Social science, economics, and the role and contributions of the Flathead National Forest will be a component of each of the field trips.

The information shared and the feedback received will be used to develop and finalize the assessment, determine needs for change, and to draft a proposed plan. There will be additional opportunities to engage in the collaborative process as the plan is developed over the next few years.

Please RSVP to Wade Muehlhof ([ewmuehlhof@fs.fed.us](mailto:ewmuehlhof@fs.fed.us) or 406-758-5252) at least one week before the field trip(s) you plan to attend. Please let us know if you have any special accommodation needs. For additional details please visit the Flathead National Forest Plan Revision page on our website:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/flathead/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5422786&width=full>

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